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LETTER DATED 9 DECEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the address dated 2 December 1996 by His Excellency Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Summit in Lisbon.

May I ask your kind assistance in circulating the present letter and enclosed text as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dr. Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: Russian]

Statement given in Lisbon on 2 December 1996 by the President of Georgia at the Summit Meeting of the States Members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Allow me to begin from afar - Lisbon inclines one to reflect upon history.

It is the end of the fifteenth century, the dividing line between two ages. A ship sets out to sea, leaving the harbour. It will round the Cape of Gales and trace new routes for Europe.

The analogy is clear: I am referring to the voyage of Vasco de Gama. He navigated his ship by the compass of a new idea. It was the idea of a discovery and it did take place.

At the close of this century, we would do well to consider where our guiding ideas will take us.

Two years ago in Budapest, we gave OSCE a new name. Two years later, in Lisbon, we must assess the results of that step. Having renamed the Conference an "Organization", where did we place our priorities? By replacing the "European house" with "European architecture", shall we also change the current state of affairs?

There is no great architecture without a great idea. Does it correspond to the idea that led us to victory over the cold war? Is it capable of pointing to new horizons and weathering the storms raging at the close of the century? The total destruction caused by local wars is no less than that brought about by global conflicts. The acts of brutality committed by militant nationalists or aggressive separatists are no less savage than those perpetrated by the Nazis.

There is not a single Helsinki basket that they would not turn into a receptacle for their blood-stained refuse.

I represent a country where people understand this not from television. Therefore, I have the right to ask: what exactly are we doing? The answer is obvious. We are appeasing criminal regimes, placing them on an equal footing with legitimate Governments. They lead us around on a leash and we accede to their ultimatums. We turn a blind eye to the tragic farces that they stage, leading to the creeping legitimization of the results of ethnic cleansing and territorial expropriation. We are afraid to call genocide genocide and we are timid about condemning the perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

As a result, tragedy follows upon tragedy, as in our case, from Abkhazia to Russia, the northern Caucasus.

It is difficult to imagine that this is taking place at the end of the twentieth century in view of its greatest achievement - the victory over the cold war.

Let me remind you that this victory was the fruit of new political thinking, a new political mentality. These concepts are not unique to any single period. Each age is driven by a new idea that brings about a breakthrough into the unknown. Only thinking on such a scale can create security guarantees throughout the Eurasian land mass.

For the time being, we have to acknowledge that part of the cargo that our ship is carrying comes from the time of the cold war.

Such are the interminable discussions about the ends of the Earth to which alliances should or should not expand or the incessant wondering as to what kind of world we are living in - a unipolar or multipolar one. The accompanying rhetoric is also from that time. It is dangerous because it bears the seeds of confrontation.

My country is small. It is like a drop of water, but one in which the entire ocean is reflected. In spite of what we have been through, Georgia, as in the past, is committed to the principle of the peaceful, political settlement of conflicts. In four years, it has undergone a transformation from a devastated State to a civil society, having laid the foundation for democracy, a market economy and stability. Today, we have a stable national currency, a minimum rate of inflation, greater economic potential, and a gross domestic product with an annual growth rate of 14 per cent. We achieved all this with the support of our friends, the world community and European structures. This demonstrates that their effectiveness is extremely high and can be maintained at the same level in other areas as well. Nevertheless, these are only the first signs of a positive process. The crisis has not yet been overcome. Hundreds of thousands of our citizens are living below the poverty line and the refugee situation is horrific.

Many things are clearer to us. Namely, there is no shield, regardless of the borders where it is placed, that is as mighty and as effective as the economic rehabilitation and rebirth of the States in all the post-totalitarian countries. There is nothing better than such integration into European structures. There is no better guarantee for the security of these States than expanding the European Union to eastern and south-eastern Europe. Literally all States would welcome this.

Europe possesses what is essential for achieving this - a space with a single world-view extending from Vancouver to Vladivostok, where the bipolar world no longer exists and a common value system based on the philosophy of democratic liberalism and respect for human rights is being established.

This advantage, with all its enormous potential, must not be permitted to give way to a nostalgic yearning to revive the doctrine of the balance of power as the sole guarantee of security. In this space, OSCE must establish those of its principles that would protect our common values, including our cultural heritage, and rule out any kind of conflict, including that between

civilizations. Not the least of such principles should be the responsibility to meet the slightest challenge to our common security. Anyone, a regime, a group of people or even a State daring to infringe European peace should expect to the inevitability of punishment.

Europe possesses everything necessary to achieve this. For the time being it lacks just one thing - the binding force of the Helsinki provisions to guarantee their unconditional implementation.

And so I ask myself and you, distinguished colleagues, has the time not come to consider a new Helsinki treaty, whose final act would become the basic European law, a constitution of Europe for the twenty-first century? Perhaps this is too bold, but we are in Lisbon, where everything disposes one to boldness and where the heroes of the Lusiad at one time achieved the impossible, having asked themselves: "Why not, indeed?".

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